



*your  
secretary  
#2*



i learned how to wear make-up from a girl named betty. it seems no coincidence that the skaters from my middle school called all pretty girls "betty" the two betties i know are both beautiful. my mother's given name is betty, though she goes by an androgynous moniker instead. i

was haunted as a child by pictures of my mother's modelling career. she told me not to wear make-up, so i didn't. i couldn't shave my legs, so i never have. i laughed at all the stories of gay girls falling for straight best friends, but there i was perched on the edge of her boyfriend's bathtub letting betty put make-up on me.

my ♥ hurt all the time and i knew i had to get out of town. i got mugged walking home from a party the same week alex told me he needed a new roommate in chicago. things were falling apart and together while the snow turned brown melting in the gutters. detroit was my closet where everyone just thought i was shaun's hag or dan's ex or the crazy girl who left a barrel of catshit on evan's lawn. i was tired of fucking "straight" girls who'd go back to their boyfriends in

the morning because it was "easier." There were a handful of queers and hos who made life bearable, but i spent an entire winter month behind the basement's barred windows watching nine seasons of roseanne in an unheated apartment. i still went to menjo's with shaun and klair on thursdays, even after the xanadu remodel and the price of their rubbing alcohol mixed drinks were increased from \$1 to \$2. no amount of shenanigans made me feel differently - not the scuba diving classes i indulged in, the non-profit i worked for, or even saturday margarita night at cass cafe. i was privileged beyond belief, but the feeling of breathing underwater was as surreal as i felt in my daily life walking down warren with detroit cops yelling at me to "clean up my dogs crap." My first night in chicago nick john ditched me at madonna night only to arrive at my new apartment the next day declaring, "licking assholes is not as great as i thought it would be."

i say that after our fancy bday dinner that i am meeting someone for a movie which is by an act of conflation turned into a date by my family. everyone is teasing me in a way only the baby in the family, even at the age of 30, gets razed. "is he cute?" is the chant from my cousin and sister-in-law. My dad is shifting uncomfortably in his leather chair. My mom is gripping her napkin under the table. "mom, you know i am not meeting a man." through her gritted teeth she says, "well, there's a 50% chance." "no, mom," i counter, "there is a 100% chance she is not."

and this conversation seems too ridiculous in the grand scheme of things. it is spinning out of time and space. i have considered myself out since high school when adrienne and i might not have been girlfriends,

but everyone (including my mother) knew we were fucking after school on my rattly twin bed.

...but my parents deny any and everything that is inconvenient in their empire of silence. my father especially is the king of denial. When i graduated from high school with a full ride to automechanic school he asked if i could go to the school's sister hospitality school instead. "dad!" i shouted, "i am hostile! not hospitable!" they think everything is a fad or trend or worse, an new rebellion. they are in denial about everything they don't like about me - that i am fat (and proud), that i like to live in the city, that i ♥ detroit, that my friends are not all white, middle class, and almost none of them are straight, that i am a heavily tattooed woman. my father goes so far as to tell me that if i were to fall in love with a person of color i would be doing it with the sole purpose and

intent to upset him. in his mind  
i am an extension of him and  
everything i do is about him.

while the concept of coming out  
can be cathartic and self-actual-  
izing it is still based on the  
idea of "straight as default"  
while that paradigm continues,  
how out can you be? there are  
always be situations anew for  
coming out. it has been shown  
that society is more "accepting"  
of LGBTQAI (and the rest of the  
alphabet) if they know us, but  
this seems the old game of the  
oppressed having to teach the  
(cough cough) repressed about  
our (seriously!) undeniable  
humanity. the goal of coming  
out can be to normalize gay  
people. to me it seems quite  
othering in that it puts the  
onus on us to declare ourselves,  
sometimes to great anxiety.  
stating, for others consumption,  
something that is a natural and  
ingrained as the hand we favor  
to flip you off.

if you don't know i am queer you  
don't know me very well.

the idea of coming out is so tied to our family of origin saying, "you are okay," but there are so many ways family's tell ALL of us that we aren't exactly what they expected when the stork dropped us off that queerness (esp in a queer theory sense) is a moot point. i know that if i brought jesus himself home to mom and dad they might say "isn't his hair a little long?" having family say "you are okay" or even better "at 30, you know better who you are, what you need than we ever will." this is a thing i don't need to hear anymore from anyone. i just do it.

"for an ex-sex worker you sure are a prude." butchie says to me after the six whisky gingers that landed me in her bed have worn off. inside i am thinking "way to be so fucked up & shaming," but on the outside i am still and quiet. later when i



realize i had left my favorite octopus necklace at her place and want it back she refuses. "listen, you seem like you

want a girlfriend and i am not in the market for a girlfriend."

"shit!" i shake my head, "the fact that i didn't want to have sex with you should be a clue that i clearly don't want to date you either." with much

disdain she tells our mutual friends i don't put out and

LB buys me a replacement octopus.

"look at that" i say, pointing into my 8x8 bedroom, "look at my bed." my bed is slouched all over the place, devouring the room, a big consuming mouth.

"what a mess." when i was 19 i got my first big girl bed. my

parents said this would be my bed until i got married. i was married on that bed night after night until we thrust it out the window on a bright january afternoon. we watched it crash down on the neighbor's porch, crushing their lawn furniture. every 3 years i got a new bed, breaking each in succession. it was a joke in my family- a jump here, fuck there, a sprawling drag out fight. in chicago i have had 3 beds. the futon from alex's mom's basement, christianed by neglected cats. reba's old hospital bed with the headboard for leverage and this princess & the pea monstrosity. a frankenstein composed of discards from departing roommates. it started with a lone mattress on the floor. girls would actually sleep with me on that miserable bed, an ocean of dog fur and floor grit washing over our bodies. miserable lays on that miserable bed. now i have two matt-

resses and a box spring, slipping and sliding all over each other each night, dumping me on

the floor each morning, puking  
up books and twisted underwear,  
scissors and ballpoint pens.

meredith tells me that after she  
heard i'd had my ♡ broken by  
some gay girl she didn't know,  
that she used the few words she'd  
heard to describe this mythical  
woman to find her on the world  
wide web. "she seems so arrogant  
and self important," mere says in  
a bid to cheer me up, but i hunch  
my shoulders and turn my face  
away, feeling instantly sick to  
my stomach i wrap my arms around  
myself, an anchor. "listen," mere  
says in her low, sometimes inaudi-  
ble way, "finding a girlfriend in  
this town is like trying to get a  
tenure position. you basically  
gotta wait for someone to die."

i thought i was the last person  
on earth to still sport a con-

spicuous facial piercing, but today i met a cute girl with an obvious nosering obvious because it was not one of those small sparkley studs. Effie claims straight girls wear to flag that they are not too uptight to enjoy anal sex. no, this was an obvious nosERING and i stared at it while she stared at me.

there has always been a policy of secrecy and silence in my family which i have defied at every turn. even as a child i was a non-stop chatterbox and divulger of private details and provided a running commentary on our life. at 5 i became the designated patient, attending therapy weekly to discuss my uncontrollable anger and violent outbursts. as an adult, my therapist tells me that anger like that in children is usually a sign

that said could feel unable to communicate.

although there were pictures of mark in our house i didn't know he was my brother until i was 8. it wasn't until my mid-twenties that i heard the story of his death. this knowledge did not come from my family. i was 6 months old when mark & the girl who was his passenger dies in a driving crash. according to the story i was told the wreck was caused by more than alcohol. the only time my mom acknowledged the existence of this girl was when i explicitly asked if my mom had attended her funeral. "no, shw was a bad influence," the subtext being that my mom blamed her for the accident. i wish i knew my brother's girlfriend's name.

i have been told it is easier for me because i never knew mark. essence i don't know what i am missing, but living with the mythology (constructed with the few scraps of info i have about mark's life) has been

like living with a ghost,  
overcast, in and with a  
shadow. the grief & loss that  
has informed my childhood &  
my relationship with my  
parents has not been easy  
either. i often feel kinship  
with others who have dealt  
with sudden loss early in life.  
i feel that mark was taken from  
us not only by his death, but our  
inability to talk about him.

it is important to share your  
story no matter how many times  
it has been told, how simple,  
self indulgent, poorly edited,  
articulated or imagined. please  
don't be silenced or shamed. your  
story is important. your words  
are important. do not let any-  
one, any authority, (say the story  
of you is not worth telling.

after dave and mike and sean i just can't make sense of it anymore. i ask my mom how mrs. p deals with keith's suicide.

"with guilt," my mom says. "how do you deal with mark's death?"

"we never talked to anyone about mark's death and maybe we should have, but it's too late now."

and i take a deep breath and say "it's never too late. there is always time. i am always here to talk about mark."

and she tells me,

"it's still too hard."

when i say i'm from detroit, people always ask "detroit proper?" because were in the windy city people from all over southeast michigan say they're from detroit. when they ask where i'm ~~from~~ REALLY from i don't know how to answer they city where i was born? the town were my father's best

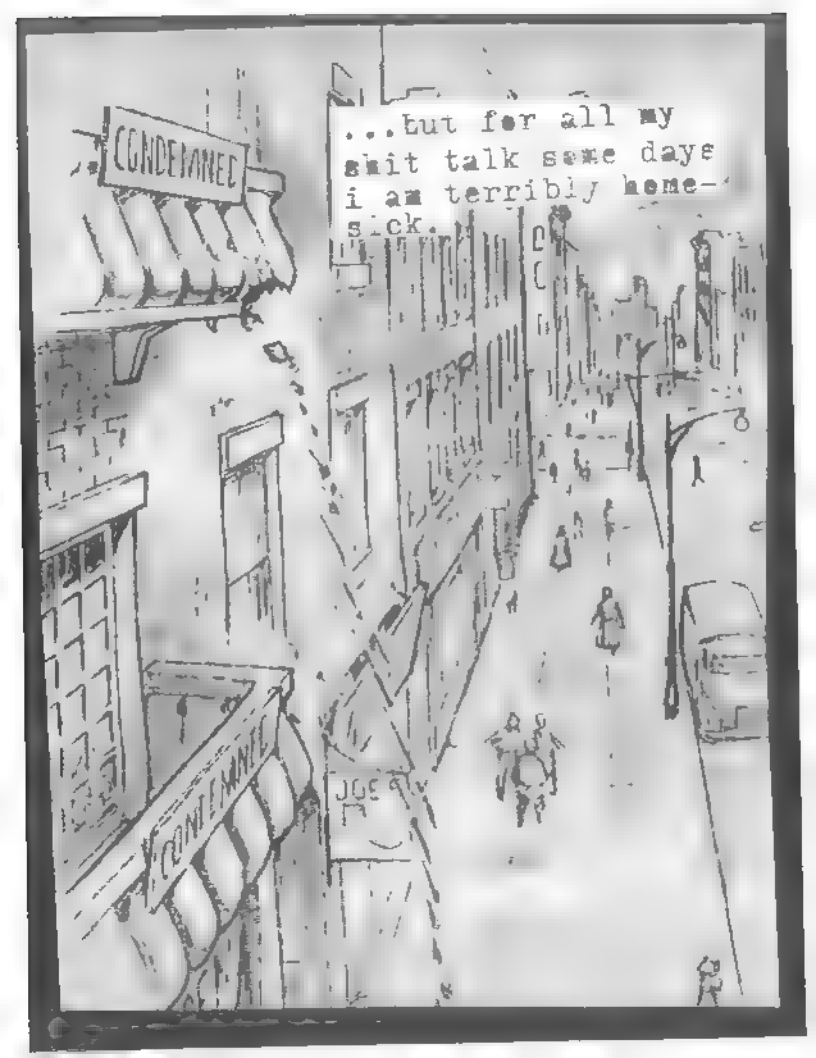
friend built the house i grew  
up in? the notoriously racist  
town where i went to high  
school? baltimore - the first  
city i wasted away, homesick?  
dc area where i celebrated  
my 21st year by throwing my  
specially made diabetic birth-  
day cake in a baby pool while  
my girlfriend fucked a marine  
next door? london, where caris  
and i played house for 6 months  
fabulous ferndale where i was  
homeowner of the most discrep-  
utable house on the block?  
detroit, where i fought with  
slumlords like everyone else?

but i know i am from detroit  
despite everywhere else i have  
laid my head. she tells me any-  
one who knows what it's like to  
turn a trick in the leland hotel  
is from detroit. anyone who has  
driven the non-profit's van the  
wrong way on an off ramp with  
impunity is from detroit. any-  
one who has gotten high in the  
makeshift office in the middle of  
the shrinking cities exhibit or  
thrown a handful of expensive  
french cheese down the front of  
an autoshow sponsors blouse or  
been held up with an ax or car-  
jacked with a broken crackpipe



or ripped down a bathroom stall  
in a show of gay rage and been  
permanently banned from malebox  
is from detroit. anyone who has  
picked a fight with ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~bottom~~ a  
bartender in the middle of uni-  
versity foods over the honor of  
a beautiful girl is from detroit.  
and of course you have a mail-  
box at university foods to get  
your zine mail if you live in  
detroit. anyone who has ever laid  
in the piss stained street sob-  
bing begging to be allowed to self-  
destruct in peace like any good  
detroiter or any of the 100s of  
other dehumanizing things that  
happen while you are trying to  
survive in detroit.

"detroit is all about harm re-  
duction," she says while snorting ~~an~~  
coke of the floor of our favorite  
dive bar, "detroit is lawless, just  
like you."



CONDEMNED

...but for all my  
shit talk some days  
i am terribly home-  
sick.

CONDEMNED

JACKSON ST

katie says jen is "the whole package." i ask if i am "the whole package." after a pause katie says, "you are a good storyteller" which is good enough. kirstin uses the term "whole package" to describe someone who ~~is~~ got it all - brains, beauty, integrity, confidence.

you have to be your own "whole package."

you are "the whole package"

finished feb 2010

EXCUSE IT/HEAVENS TO BETSY

♥ to SHAUN

alex

kirstin

meredith

andrea

LB

katie

jen

brittany

nick john

alana

and

you.

HEAVEN STREET





**adventures in public transit**

Before he was so hostile, -  
 never read or will be afraid -  
 reason - reason - reason -  
 I had a -

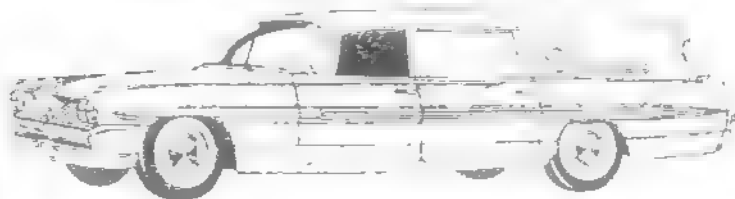
the public take forever to get  
anywhere and when they did, they  
often found the roads were  
capped axles and the shooting  
from the road. Based on  
the bicycles, it was like it  
they were the only ones.

However, one of the  
was to [redacted]  
my life of [redacted]  
[redacted] I [redacted]

1. Leaving the car, I went to the back. Unfortunately, a rear-ty cracked and I placed my tupperware container full of the baby in the car. She has made it her mission to be my newbff.

she eyes me with a look of short-  
sightedness. The word 'good' ends in a

11. [redacted] that  
[redacted] statement over the  
question, "Are those cookies  
good?" [redacted] "Yes,"  
[redacted] this is  
[redacted] a [redacted] [redacted]  
[redacted] thing is that [redacted] [redacted]



2.

Meth couple sit. ~~xxxx~~  
casually onto the bus and  
... have to sit by the  
... some initial fighting  
... talk  
... recent visit  
...  
the unfortunate

"I don't understand. Why  
... is so picked out at 101,  
... his white thought-  
...  
...  
...  
... incredulous.  
"Didn't do at ...?!!  
... best part"

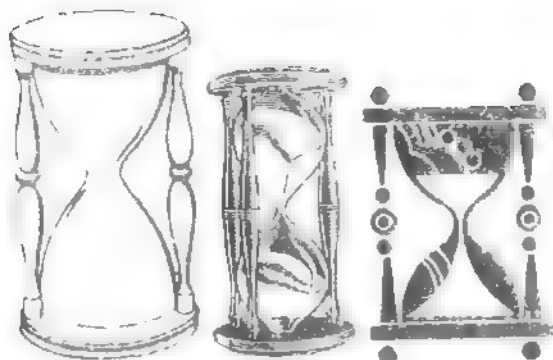
and shake his ...  
...  
... friend ...  
...  
... pan and the ...







What you must do is to go to the  
 doctor to get a people. We  
 don't know that normal  
 people are in the world. But

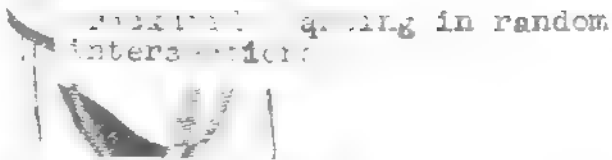


...don't i be waxing interminably  
...landmark, ...  
...to the ...  
...and forest? So then,  
...  
...Richard, ...  
up the voice, ...  
...and a half  
...wheezing  
the next day. ...  
...  
...I'm not one of those ...  
...automatically  
...everything, but  
...almost ...  
...light  
imaginative.



## Detroit is...

summer's spent doing  
 the beach on cold Isle,  
 as playing on the beach  
 in the 1920s and 30s  
 to have empty budweiser bot-  
 tles thrown in the ocean  
 1920s.



...ing in random  
interactions

... 'touch me  
... satisfaction' ...  
... club

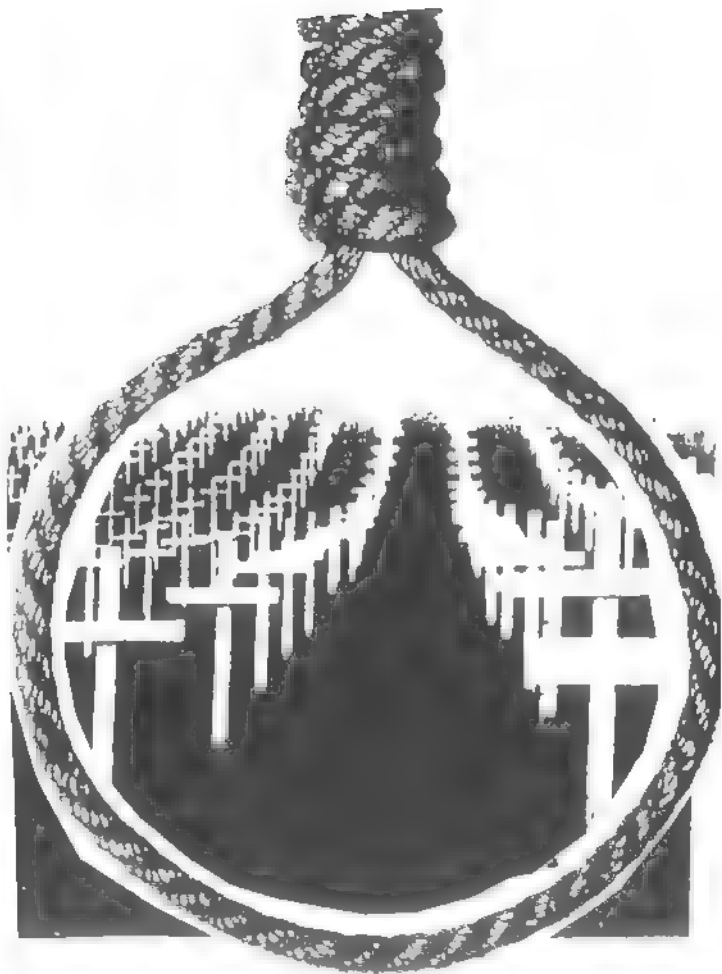
...ing ... , terr-  
... because  
... in the city

the best credit record



white stripes ... wolf eyes  
and ... period at the  
end of it







... let me,  
... sorry ...  
... I would be  
... when I overtook ...  
... haven't ...  
... I know  
... thought were inevitable. It's ...  
... but I think it was justine. We ...  
... a good time and some good times,  
... or. Still, I'll always ...  
... in ... whatever.  
Fuck it.



2 line 12

created over

...ive-wra ...

days in ...

Thanks ...

90101

... which I signed myself to the ... I  
would be ... and  
from school ...  
... mentally strong  
... Unfortunate ...

... an experienced  
... It can be an ...  
... lie  
... slice of ...  
... Tukwila ...

... this ...  
... for  
... and/or ...  
... towards ...  
... to

... month ...  
... of ...



middle aged female

being called a 'fuck-  
ing bitch' by her son

and a 'fucking bitch' by her son

and a 'fucking bitch' by her son

his is clay...i...  
re declares as sh...

proceeds to...

her son that... in  
can harbor and how

state is...  
lineally... 'Norman' at

the to...  
manag... 180 &

ma... in the corner who...

the merits



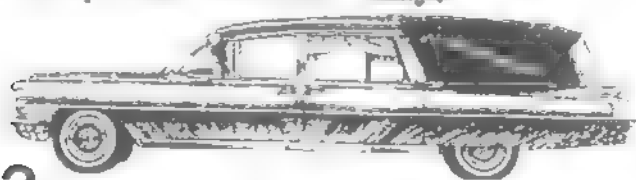
... begins  
to buckle on seat belt.

... bought it and ...  
brought to her last ...

... quietly ...  
... you be ...?

... before you ...  
... tried to ...

... immediately falling a-  
sleep next to his ...



3. ... what if ...

... , ...



My last week

in the city

in more of a 1920s  
kind of tang. MY grandpa  
ed our last time.



we had stayed car  
first-- y--show. I shipped  
at the house, packed in my  
clothes and some. Ate  
at Los Altos, slow.

Last time. I got my  
led in by some random  
who then look at my car  
and on the way home  
of my days. I  
tures  
It just  
was missing.  
be the

It'll be more p. 19. once

you leave us for now.



- sneers from the patrons of gay night at the atlas bar after you and a friend loudly deride 'all of these fags dancing to new order'.
- sneers from the patrons of every gay bar period. 
- drag queen performances that include 20 minutes of ranting about their 'bitch-ass room-mates'.
- the 6 dollar manager's special from sidly's in mexicantown 
- driving down woodward at dusk, feeling that almost anything is possible
- driving down woodward in the wintertime and feeling that everything is hopeless and that you'd might as well just go home and get drunk



old houses and multiple  
roommates/cheap rent that  
half your roommates can't  
pay cuz it's noon and they're  
drunk again, have no jobs and  
just spent all their money  
on records

summer shows at the detroit  
art space r.i.p.


DETROIT JUST IS, FOREVER AND EVER..

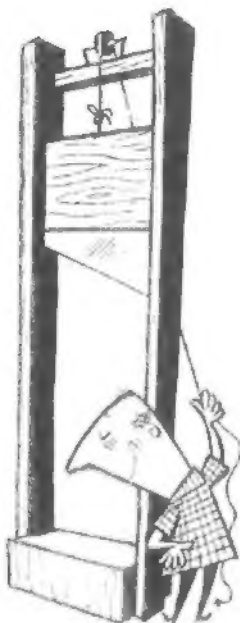


Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

You are the love of my life. You made what should have been one of the hardest decisions of my life easy and you make everyday better for me by just being here. My heart nearly explodes every time we sing 'Angel of Death' together. I love you.

Xoxo,  
Shaun





NICE TO MEET YOU.  
HAVE A NICE DAY.